

Proposal Abstract

Applicant Name: Missoula County

Project Title: Pedestrian Bridge Replacement

Project Description and Benefits to Restoration: Missoula County proposes to remove and replace a County-owned pedestrian bridge over the Blackfoot River arm of the Milltown Reservoir known as the Bonner Bridge. The project will restore aquatic and riparian habitat resources. Replacement of the existing bridge will maintain the baseline level of transportation services for the local community. The project will also replace lost recreational resources by linking to pedestrian and recreational trails planned by the Milltown Superfund Site Redevelopment Working Group in the restored confluence area, Milltown, West Riverside, upstream to the Turah and Weigh Station Fishing Access sites, and to Missoula's Kim Williams Riverfront Trail.

The Bonner Bridge is within the Milltown Reservoir area, as defined in the Upper Clark Fork River Basin Restoration Plan Procedures and Criteria (RPPC) and within the BFR1 reach of the of the State Restoration Plan for the Clark Fork River and Blackfoot River near Milltown Dam – October 2005. The Bonner Bridge was built in 1921, after the completion of the Milltown Dam in 1908. It served as a state highway bridge until 1977, when it was closed by the State of Montana and turned over to the County for long-term maintenance as a pedestrian bridge. It is a two-span bridge with a concrete center pier, two concrete piers in the river channel under the bridge, and two approach piers near each river bank.

When the Milltown Reservoir is drawn down by 29 feet in fall, 2008 as part of Superfund site remediation, the river bed elevation will drop and reservoir sediments will be scoured from the bed of the Blackfoot River channel of the reservoir. As this occurs, the Bonner Bridge piers and abutments will be stressed due to increased river velocity, and may be undermined as the river cuts down to its new bed elevation, resulting in the need to replace the bridge if it is to provide for safe pedestrian passage over the Blackfoot River.

Under the Milltown Reservoir Site Consent Decree, impacts to the Interstate 90 and Highway 200 bridges will be mitigated by the United States Environmental Protection Agency. Missoula County is responsible for costs associated with the Bonner Bridge. The County sought funds for replacing the bridge through the 2005 federal transportation bill. The bill included an appropriation of \$5 million for pedestrian trails, footbridges and river access site improvements at or near the Milltown Dam site in Missoula County and Deer Lodge County. Because these funds will be split between the two counties, Missoula County must seek other funding sources for the projects it proposed for federal funding. The County has prioritized the Bonner Bridge replacement and construction of pedestrian trails in residential neighborhoods that will be impacted by heavy equipment traffic during Superfund remediation and restoration. These projects must be completed prior to the fall 2007 drawdown.

Removal of the existing pedestrian bridge and three concrete piers from the restored river bed will restore aquatic resources and riparian habitat and allow restoration of a naturally functioning river channel as part of the restoration of the Clark Fork and Blackfoot Rivers following removal of the Milltown Dam. The existing bridge will be replaced with a three span pedestrian bridge with no piers constraining the river channel.

Total project cost is \$1,300,870. The County requests a grant of \$975,652 from the Natural Resource Damage Program, and will provide \$325,218 in matching funds (25 % match). Demolition of the existing bridge and construction of the new bridge would be completed prior to the third week of August, 2007 because the bridge is used by Bonner School (K-8) students who reside west of the Milltown Reservoir. Streambanks and the right-of-way disturbed by removal and installation of the bridges will be restored using plant species consistent with revegetation plans for the State Restoration Plan.